

TRAUMA: A CATALYST FOR INNER CHANGE AND PERSONAL GROWTH

BACKGROUND:

Previous research into post-traumatic growth shows that all people change and report perceived growth in the aftermath of traumatic or difficult life events. This project builds on the findings by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995; 1996; 2004), who identified three domains that are subject to change: perception of self, the experience of relationships with others, and one's philosophy of life.

METHOD:

Seven female participants with an age range of 20- 42 years (mean= 32.3) were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. They were asked to talk about their experience of an event that caused them to change how they see, understand and interact with themselves and others. To analyse the data the 6-steps thematic analysis method developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used.

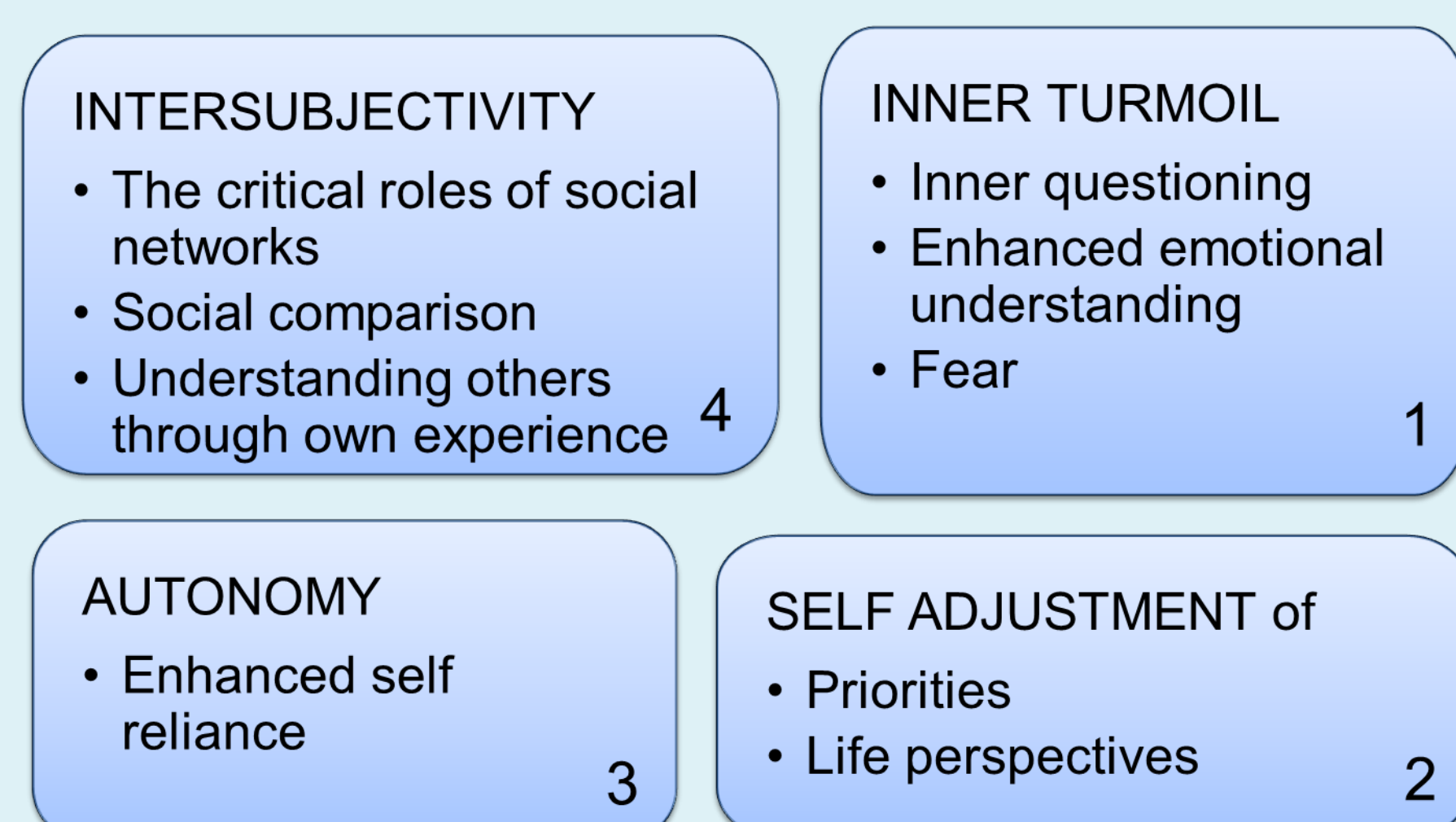


Figure 1. Thematic Analysis map

RESULTS:

Figure 1 shows the four reoccurring themes which were selected to describe the data. The processing of the events facilitated the participants in their journey towards reaching a more autonomic and authentic self (Ferrara, 1998). This inner change brought by the event has also affected the way they see and interact with others. Causing them to seek more meaningful relationships, to learn to be kinder and more tolerant to others, and to set more meaningful life goals.

DISCUSSION:

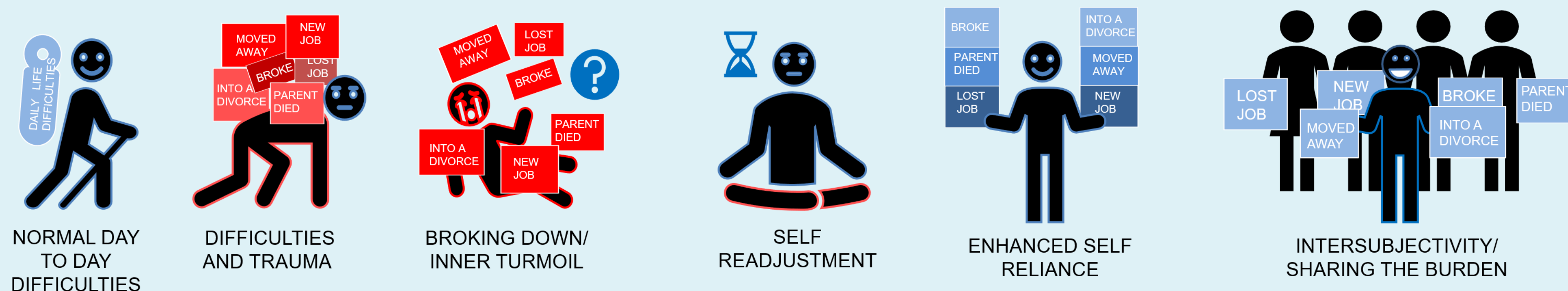
Contrary to Spinelli (2015) the events experienced by participants did not have to be shattering to bring change. Additionally, participants seemed to have experienced change in a fashion of accumulation of stressors, perhaps highlighting that each individual has a tolerance threshold before stressors overwhelm them (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Furthermore, contrary to Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) suggestion, that the change brought by traumatic events is chaotic and lacks direction, the participants seemed to have experienced a directional change dependent on the type of trigger-event they experienced.

LIMITATIONS:

The sample was made up by females, six out of seven being educated at least at undergraduate level, with four participants having a degree in psychology.

IMPLICATIONS:

These findings might be useful for therapists and counsellors who work with people that have experienced difficult life events. It could contribute to the creation of a more tailored counselling service and shorter recovery.



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